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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes two joint sessions held by the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education to hear testimony on educational partnerships in Native American education. Successful partnerships are described, including: (1) school-business partnerships that allow students to explore career possibilities, provide job training and entrepreneurship training, and provide instructional computer software; (2) school-community partnerships in which parents come to summer school with their children, and the community provides in-kind contributions to supplement Title V funds; and (3) college-community partnerships to develop integrated and culturally relevant curriculum, to promote student interest in higher education, to give tribal managers technical assistance and administrative training, to implement health promotion projects, and to incorporate computers into the schools. Recommendations are offered for possible future partnerships, such as partnerships between the state department of education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and for methods of establishing and promoting new partnerships. Also discussed are strategies for increasing parental involvement in the schools, the need for culturally relevant curriculum, the need to hold school districts accountable for how they spend federal Indian funds, the need for Indian school accreditation and teacher certification, and the need to educate the general public about Indian history and treaty rights. (SV)

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions
NIEA 22nd Annual Conference - San Diego, California
October 15, 1990

"Partnerships of Schools, Tribes, Communities, Parents, and Businesses"

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issue Sessions
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Summary: "Partnerships of Schools, Tribes, Communities, Parents, and Businesses"

The first session on Partnerships of Schools, Tribes, Communities, Parents, and Businesses was hosted by INAR Task Force co-chair William Demmert and NACIE member Buck Martin. The second session on these issues was hosted by INAR Task Force member Bob Martin.

I. Partnerships That Work

Partnerships Involving Businesses

- The Phoenix Unified School District developed a program with corporations to provide 7th grade students the opportunity to explore careers they have an interest in. For example, one student who wanted to be a pilot worked with Sky Harbor International Airport and was given opportunities to work at the control tower and to fly in a helicopter. The project has ties with many other businesses that provide many hours of in-kind contributions. This way, the school is able to maximize its dollars while providing a unique opportunity for its students.

- In one rural district, high school juniors and seniors work for the local businesses, with half of their salaries being paid by the businesses, and the other half by the school district. The students are trained as secretaries, bank clerks, waitresses, accountants, and lab technicians.

- "Workshop and Business Opportunities" creates partnerships between aspiring entrepreneurs and successful business people. This 16-week training is based on the philosophy that problem solving, thinking creatively, finding solutions, and developing flexible, responsive business plans are the bases of good business practice and are also useful lifetime skills. They conduct interactive sessions between participants and successful people from the Indian business community in which they do not simply give answers, but instead look at case studies and examine their own thinking on how to solve problems. This program originally came out of New York City and was developed for black people in Harlem in the 60s. It was taken to Oglala Sioux in the late 70s and we've taken it to the Southwest and found it successful not only in urban settings, but also in very remote communities.

- A partnership in Wisconsin with Milwaukee city business people and IBM nonetheless brought an IBM computer program "Writing to Read" in some of the Milwaukee inner-city schools and in rural schools in Wisconsin where there are high unemployment rates and strong financial needs. In several of the poorest counties where the schools did not even apply for the free equipment, IBM nonetheless brought the equipment directly to the tribes and provided training.

Partnerships Involving the Community

- The St. Regis Reservation has established several partnerships. One is with the school district right across from the reservation; one is with colleges and universities in the community and around New York; and another is between the tribe and parents. As a result of these partnerships, most of the community members that have been participating in the project on parent advisory committees or as technical advisors of the tribe have gone forward to work on and/or complete advanced degrees. The dropout rate of this group is down to 6 percent. The number of students who have gone on to higher education as a result of these partnerships has also increased significantly while their dropout rates decreased significantly. Furthermore, Native language and cultural activities have been integrated in the schools, and the Indian population in schools has increased because students are staying longer.

- The New Mexico Indian Education Center for Excellence is a community-oriented, research-based educational institution that will combine the talents, resources, and efforts of the 22 school districts serving the Indian population in New Mexico. The mechanism used to form this coalition was a joint powers agreement that protected the sovereign rights of tribes while allowing the participating systems to work together. The purpose of this partnership is to develop new strategies for dealing with Indian education issues by conducting community-based research. Because this is community based, the communities themselves identify the research problems and assist with the design and implementation of the research model. Additionally, the center serves to identify exemplary programs that are successful in certain school systems if there is interest in replicating those programs.

- The Rosebud Reservation has a number of partnerships in various stages of development. In conjunction with Sinte Gleska College, all of the local school districts, and the contract school at St. Francis, (1) they have developed a unified curriculum for the reservation from preschool through the adult level, (2) they are currently working on the certification of Lakota language teachers and integrating tribal curriculum into the local school systems, (3) they are developing a tribal education code that will give the tribe control of both the school at St. Francis and the state public school, and (4) they are working in a partnership with the State of South Dakota to develop accreditation and certification requirements for teachers within the reservation boundaries.

- Minneapolis Public Schools has a summer school program called Knee Bend in which parents come to school with their children. Both transportation and day care for younger siblings are provided by the school. Parent participation is very high in this summer program.

- The Inter-tribal Friendship House in Oakland is attempting to form an association with the Oakland School District to support the schools when their Title V monies run low and supplement some of their money by in-kind contributions or some other process that would help the Indian students in grades K-12. This association would also include the parents and community. We have recently resumed a tutorial program for a more fully integrated education program all the way through adult education. To establish financial stability, we are seeking corporate support from small companies and minority businesses. Currently we have two businesses within our own organization--a gift shop and a screen print--that help stabilize our funding, but we feel that increasing our business ventures would be beneficial.

Partnerships Involving Postsecondary Institutions

- The Zuni Public School District in New Mexico has been involved in a partnership with Stanford University for the past five years in a project called the Zuni-Stanford Project. Through this partnership, Stanford University provides technical assistance and support in looking at issues identified as important in the Zuni community. As a result, tribal managers and district and board personnel have received administrative training from Stanford University. Stanford has also provided assistance in setting up a database for census accountability for the tribe. Additionally, they have developed joint projects involving Stanford undergraduates and Zuni high school students in teaching and learning Southwest cultures with a focus on Zuni cultures.

  The Zuni Life School Program has been developed in conjunction with Stanford's health promotion/disease prevention project. Three years ago, prior to the implementation of this project, the Zuni community had one of the highest suicide rates in the United States among Native Americans, averaging four per year. Since partial implementation of the project has occurred, and they have developed a Zuni-specific culturally-based curriculum and approach, there have been no school-age youth suicides.

- Northern Arizona University has partnerships with the Northern Arizona School Board Association, the Navajo and Hopi tribes, and the U.S. Department of Education to teach students to use computers and also how to incorporate them into their everyday lives. They also work with teachers on the Navajo and Hopi reservations and provide them with workshops and seminars on how to become aware of the needs of Native American students. This partnership works with the dropout prevention project and provides parenting sessions for parents in the area. Northern Arizona University also has a summer program called Nizhoni Camp that helps Native Americans make the transition from rural reservation life into higher education.

- Grossmont College in the San Diego area has created a special relationship with the Indian community and the college-held fundraisers to establish an Indian scholarship fund. Any student who attends Grossmont has his or her books and tuition paid by the urban Indian community. They also provide a mentor for their Indian students to retain them in school.

Partnerships Involving the State

- A school in North Dakota and the state department of education operate under a cooperative education venture; the school would not be able to operate without the state foundation aid payments. In turn, the school implements the effective schools program of both the Bureau and the state school improvement process and thus works toward the total betterment of education.

II. **Suggestions for Future Partnerships**

- Schools--especially rural and reservation schools--should develop partnerships with universities to begin building and training a teacher corps for those schools. Because this teacher corps will be built in cooperation with tribes, graduating teachers will be able to move directly into their school systems.

- BIA and IHS need to be in a partnership at school sites because children need health services wherever they are spending their time.

- Indian educators should study the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) used to track students because Indian children are also a very mobile group. We need a tracking system within the BIA to follow our highly mobile children. A partnership between the migrant education program and Indian education may be a viable solution.

- BIA schools should have a special relationship with state departments of education. This would allow BIA schools to be on the textbook cycle and receive the reduced rate for purchasing textbooks and curriculum through the state department of education. Sherman Indian High School in California does not receive Impact Aid from the BIA and thus is not on the textbook cycle. However, the BIA does send Impact Aid to the public schools to ensure that those children receive state curriculum and texts.

- Partnerships between tribes and schools would be beneficial if funding could be channeled through the tribe to enable it to supplement a public school system to improve its academic programs. This would especially benefit large, urban areas where students are dropping out of school and tending to enroll in alternative programs.

III. **Establishing Partnerships**

Problems

- Because there is not much industry on reservations, there is limited opportunity for school partnerships with small businesses or even tribal businesses. Furthermore, some reservations have an 80 percent unemployment rate so if there are any opportunities for employment, the students in school would be at the bottom of the list. For example, a position for a custodian draws in 60 applicants and a teaching position draws in 100 applicants. Because some communities are so isolated, employment opportunities generally geared toward young people, such as jobs in fast-food chains, are not available to rural youth. These kids have to look for other opportunities that are usually short-term, such as agricultural work or fire fighting. However, these jobs often have restrictions and many of our youth cannot participate.

- Partnerships between school, parents, and tribes are hindered by the structure and implementation of Impact Aid (Part 223 particularly) and Title V. Under Impact Aid, there are required policies and procedures that must be developed between the tribes and the school systems. However, in order for tribes to make sure that these policies and procedures

are carried out, the only recourse they have is to file a complaint to stop the funding, which is a long, cumbersome procedure. If the Department of Education truly wanted to encourage a partnership between the public schools and Indian tribes, it would have a healthy monitoring system to make sure these regulations are implemented. This way, Indian people would be able to determine the quality, quantity, and standards of educational policies that affect their children.

Recommendations

- There are necessary ingredients to promote self-help within tribes: (1) It is necessary to look at the common denominator in partnerships--people. The development of people has to be the first priority, and within that, the resource is the spirit of volunteerism. People are not motivated by people, but rather by their concern for the well-being of children. We must therefore focus on the well-being of children. (2) Within a self-help process there must be the celebration of values that are already within our communities. (3) A process of self-help is supported by minimum involvement on the part of any outside agency. Minimum involvement empowers people to voice their own ideas, and solutions come from within.

- We need a federal policy that supports direct tribal regulatory authority over state public schools on reservations and in Indian country. Indian control is the key to effective Indian education for Indian people, but recent efforts in the federal arena have centered on trying to develop that control through funding mechanisms, parent committees, and administrative processes. The sovereignty of Indian tribes gives them authority over their members and their territory, and that sovereignty should include--at least concurrently with the state--authority to directly regulate state public schools that serve Indian children on reservations and in Indian country. This authority needs to be recognized by federal law because tribes will need to devise and adopt education laws that regulate the schools, as well as policies and programs provided for under those laws.

- Cooperation between school districts and tribes needs to be a two-way street so that once partnerships are in place, it's up to both the public school districts on reservations and the tribal governments to fulfill their parts of the agreements. In Montana, there is a law to provide for this process; however, politics and the tribal court system often get in the way of tribes fulfilling partnerships, especially in election years. It is important that in developing partnerships, both the tribal governments and the public school systems examine their needs, the types of services they are able to provide, and the laws of both the state and the tribe. Thus, tribes must develop education codes and policies to provide a direction for the public school systems.

- We need to develop plans and procedures to implement programs so the state and other entities can work together. Indian people are not organizers, except those who are educated. Some of our people do not have the kind of background knowledge of how to organize and how to implement this type of thing. Teaching our people has to be part of the process.

IV. Parental Involvement

- In order for Western education to be a part of the value system of Indian communities, Indians have to see the worth of education. After several hundred years of having education imposed upon them, it's never really been a part of the value system. It's been a long, hard struggle, but I think that a lot of parents are beginning to realize that there is value in education. However, there are still people who were punished for speaking their Native language and who experienced Christianity coming in and saying that their culture was the devil's work. It has to take a whole re-education of Indian people to make them committed to this kind of education.

- If Indian parents are going to take part in the education system, they have to realize that they do have a role in influencing the school curriculum. They have the right to say what they want their children to be taught, and they have the ability to do so through politics, electing the school board, and electing committees. I feel that these programs that require parent participation have changed a whole generation of people who are now sophisticated and making those changes for their children.

- We need to encourage non-Indian teachers to work with Indian parents so the children can see that the Indian parents and the non-Indian teachers have the same ideas about education. This is important so children will have confidence in their teachers and teachers can recognize that these children are just as important as other children in the school.

- There is a lack of involvement by Indian parents in both Title V and JOM. Title V and JOM parent committees were placed into the regulations to ensure local control, but there is still little involvement by Indian parents in the programs that affect their children. This lack of involvement exists because school administrators still hand-select parent committee members. They still write programs for the committee and expect them to sign off without any input. Also, schools get anxious when parents say they want to be involved. These things are caused by a lack of enforcement and monitoring by the BIA and Office of Indian Education and the inconsistent operating procedures for JOM from area office to area office. We need to improve monitoring by the BIA education office to see that schools properly administer the funds involving the parent committee as prescribed by the regulations.

- When schools are involved with parents, it is important that parents have a sense of ownership and belonging. Recognizing parents for their contributions is one way of continuing a partnership. By recognizing parents and creating a parent task force, one school was able to empower parents and show them that they could affect school policy. Parents in this school were more interested in being on the task force than on the school board because they felt ownership and pride in the task force.

- On our reservation we get Johnson O'Malley, Title V, Title IV, and Impact Aid, and we have parent committees for each one of these programs. I find myself going to committee meetings all of the time and I'm wondering why they aren't decisionmaking bodies instead of advisory bodies. You get burnt out after a while, and so does the superintendent. If you've got a new superintendent who is trying to open the lines of communication, he or she is

going to four meetings a month. And you're sending committee members from your board to those meetings also, and pretty soon you are losing people who are vital to your board.

V. Other Issues and Concerns

Native Culture and Languages

- Indian people are post-trauma stress disordered (PTSD) because we sit on reservations and watch our culture and language being taken away, and we question how we fit into the mainstream society that we are being pushed into.

- There has been a tremendous resistance to accepting Native languages and cultures in schools. However, research indicates that learning a language well--even a Native language--can be used as a base from which to learn other languages. Learning Native languages is also important for the retention and strength of original languages that are unique to the Americas. Recently, the Senate has passed legislation concerning Native languages and cultures.

- We need culturally-relevant curriculum that includes language and history in all subject areas and grade levels.

Academic Performance

- Students have a hard time making the transition from high school to college because they are not adequately prepared. Indian students in public schools have a problem because they are often taught less than other students but get passed on to the next grade without having an equal level of education. By the time they reach college, these students are behind grade level and first need to take developmental classes before they can succeed with college level courses.

- Native American students suffer from low academic achievement, high dropout rates, and a feeling of alienation within the school system.

- In one area, students are traveling 60 miles to attend public schools when there is a boarding school nearby. Nothing could be done about this situation because public school policy overrides the desires of the tribes and parents have a choice of where to send their children. However, it is actually not the parents making choices, but the students. Consequently, the mobility rate is high and these students are not achieving because they spend a lot of time transferring from one school to another. The students enter one public school and are not able to identify with the curriculum so they go to another school. This goes on throughout the year.

Categorical Programs

- Focus needs to be put on greater enforcement of federal regulations within the school systems to fully implement educational opportunities for Indian students. Many school districts are not abiding by regulations.

- School districts should be held responsible for all monies that come into the system, not just Title V and JOM funds. Money such as desegregation dollars should be used for teacher training programs to attract Indian teachers as role models into the school system.

- The lack of understanding and insensitivity of public school staff is a cause for low academic achievement of Native Americans. Money from Chapter 1 should be tied to regulations requiring the education of teachers on Indian education, culture, and curriculum.

Educational Facilities

- Many Native American students attend public schools because those schools are able to secure more construction monies and thus offer new and attractive facilities. Consequently, BIA grant and contract schools are losing enrollment. Some of the buildings on reservations are deteriorating year by year. Students are still housed in buildings that were built in 1940 and are dilapidated. We need new money for construction and renovation. We also need adequate maintenance funds to keep those facilities in good working condition.

School Accreditation and Teacher Certification

- We need an Indian accreditation system. Currently there are three accreditation systems the Pine Ridge Schools have to go through: the state, the North Central Accreditation, and the BIA. Each reservation should have its own separate accreditation system because we all have different cultures and different beliefs. It would be an asset for each tribe to develop its own system.

- Because our children compete with the major society, we may want our children's teachers credentialed through the State Department of Education.

- Teachers of Indian children should be certified with a specialization, as are special education teachers and ESL teachers. A specialization in addition to a regular credential would give us the foundation that we want our teachers to have.

Academic Program

- School days should be extended to match the work day of the parents so children are kept in a structured situation. Indian education could be taught through an extended day program. Currently, students are being pulled out of classes to attend Title V programs and continually miss lessons in the basic areas. We could reinforce our culture and our language through an extended day program and leave our children in the regular classrooms during the academic day.

- Public schools can do many things for students whether or not there is a job guaranteed for them when they graduate. We need to train students to be waitresses, office workers, and janitors because these are the kinds of jobs we have available. We need to teach pride in doing a good job, regardless of the job, and teach good work habits.

Funding

- There is a lack of adequate funding. The lowest per pupil expenditure in the State of South Dakota is $6,000, and yet the BIA and contract schools have $3,000 less than that. We are always operating on a shoestring budget. We need more funding to give those kids an opportunity to get the best quality education. Every year we struggle with a budget crunch and have to cut corners in transportation and food services.

- We will lose our teachers if the Gramm-Rudman cuts go into effect. Teachers are not willing to take a furlough of two or three weeks during the year. We need a stable system set up.

- The Navajo tribe has used some of its own tribal funds to develop tribal codes but does not have enough money to fund educational programs to enforce some of the established standards and policies. Tribes across the nation need a lot of financial and technical support from the national level.

Institutional Change

- Native Americans are so quick to blame others for the problems of Indian education, but we have no one else to blame but ourselves as Indian leaders and Indian parents. Blaming others doesn't solve our problems; we have the same problems today as we did years ago. We must go down to the grassroots level, to the people who are working day to day with our children--parents, teachers, principals, and school boards--as a first stepping stone. We must evaluate ourselves, the Indian people, first.

- Over the last couple of years, the Voigt Decision in Wisconsin has caused a great deal of conflict. Indian treaty rights have been the basis for bomb threats in schools, racist placards, and general controversy. Our concern is for the students in the classroom and for the possibility of enhancing the learning opportunity for all the students in the public schools; therefore, many Indian communities who have not previously looked at the possibility of going contract with their education systems are beginning to do so, because they feel a need to protect their children from these kinds of problems.

Through the assistance of a representative who has literally put his career on the line, Wisconsin has passed a bill requiring the teaching of Indian history, culture, and tribal sovereignty in all schools in the state as a vehicle for informing the public and, hopefully, offsetting some of these problems. Many of the problems that we now face in the State of Wisconsin have come about as a direct result of people not knowing anything about Indian history, tribal governments, and legal authority. When they hear about treaty rights, they assume that the Indians had gone away for the last 100 years and suddenly came back with a treaty in their hands. Because of that attitude, they feel a great deal of frustration. Their

frustration is magnified by their perception that Indians have been just like everybody else for the last 100 years.

There is a need for an educated populace in the United States that is aware of the rights and authorities that tribes do have so that children grow up in an environment that understands Indians, rather than having to educate society after a crisis has already arisen.